

that. He feels that it is a historic agreement and good for the whole world, as do I. I believe that our Congress will approve it. And of course, I've been appreciative of the words of—without committing him on any way to any details—the general words from Governor Clinton, President-elect Clinton, on this subject.

Q. Mr. President, do you view START II as a vindication of your attention to the foreign account?

The President. No, I view it as a great step for mankind. And it's not—certainly it's not a personal achievement. The people standing here with me have worked hours, endless hours, to bring this about. So it's not personal. But I take great pride in this accomplishment because I think it's a very good treaty, and I'm proud that this team was able to work it out.

POW–MIA's

Q. Are you going to ask Yeltsin to unleash more information about the American POW's situation?

The President. Well, I am confident that Boris Yeltsin will go the extra mile on that. I think he has. But we just have to wait and see on that subject because all of us remain concerned about it. But I should express my confidence in his willingness to cooperate. I don't think anyone would disagree with that at all.

I think I've got to get ready to go to Somalia. Last one.

Executive Clemency

Q. Mr. President, on the Christmas Eve pardons, does it give the appearance that Government officials are above the law?

The President. No, it should not give any such appearance. Nobody is above the law. I believe when people break the law, that's a bad thing. I've read some stupid comment to the contrary. And of course, I feel that way. But the Constitution is quite clear on the powers of the President. And sometimes a President has to make a very difficult call, and that's what I've done.

But I'm glad you asked it, because I've read some rather frivolous reporting that I don't care about the law. I pride myself on 25 or more years of public service, of serving honorably, decently, and with my integrity intact. And certainly I wouldn't feel that way if I had a lack of respect for the law. And I don't think there is one single thing in my career that could lead anybody to look at my record and make a statement of that nature. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to clear it up.

Thank you all.

Note: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The proclamation of December 24 which granted Executive clemency to six former Government officials for their conduct related to the Iran-contra affair is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Iran-Contra Investigation

December 30, 1992

On December 14, President Bush asked the Independent Counsel to supply him with a copy of his deposition of January 11, 1988, given in connection with the Iran-contra investigation. On December 18, the Independent Counsel wrote President Bush a letter stating that his office was considering the request. The Independent Counsel assured the President that his office would "try to comply."

Yesterday, however, the Deputy Independent Counsel informed the White House that the Independent Counsel had decided not to provide President Bush with a copy of the deposition at this time. President Bush has therefore asked former Attorney General Griffin Bell to assist him in seeking to obtain for public release a copy of this document. Judge Bell will also assume full responsibility for advising the